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DCC asked to remove illegal billboards

Rooftop hoardings with '07 stay orders exempted from HC ruling

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed Dhaka City Corporation to start immediate removal of all unauthorised hoardings in the capital.

However, the order is not applicable to those rooftop hoardings that obtained HC stay orders against their removal in 2007.

The court asked the inspector general of police, Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner and officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station to provide all-out cooperation to DCC authorities during their removal of hoardings.

The HC move came after Human Rights and Peace for SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Traffic on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue at Farmgate hardly move as agitating garment workers barricaded the road in front of Nabisco factory in Tejgaon in the morning for two hours triggering day-long citywide gridlocks. The photo was taken in the evening. Story on page 2.

High-ups' perks set to rise

6 bills placed in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday placed six bills in parliament seeking to increase salaries and allowances of the prime minister, ministers, the speaker and the deputy speaker, lawmakers and judges of the Supreme Court to keep those consistent with the pay hike of civil servants.

Once passed, the hiked salaries would be effective from July 1, 2009, while the allowances would come into effect from July 1 this year.

The lawmakers are the luckiest as the proposed legislation offers them much financial and other benefits including reintroduction of the system of importing duty-free vehicles with a new offer of Tk 40,000 per month for fuel, maintenance and driver.

The last caretaker government in June 2007 repealed the provision for import of duty-free vehicles on grounds of gross misuse in the past. Besides, the MPs were not given any allowances for fuel or driver.

Earlier, the parliament secretariat commission in June 2009 decided that the government would purchase vehicles for lawmakers. But finally, the government came up with the SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Cops close photo show on 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday closed a photography exhibition on extra-judicial killings around an hour before it was scheduled to start at Drik Gallery in the city's Dhanmondi.

A contingent of police went to the Drik Gallery building around 3:00pm and barred the invited guests and visitors from entering the building.

The police also did not allow anybody to come out of SEE PAGE 15 COL 7 PHOTO ON PAGE 16

PM stops 'wasteful' power pole purchase, installation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the authorities concerned to cancel all procurement and installation of electricity poles under the Rural Electrification Board, terming it wasteful and misleading.

She also asked them to find out those who manufactured and installed the electricity poles at various places.

The directives came at a regular cabinet meeting with the premier in the chair. The premier said the installation of the

poles created a misconception among people that they would soon be provided with power supply.

"But the truth is the government can't immediately ensure uninterrupted supply of power," a cabinet member quoted the premier as saying.

"We don't want people to misunderstand us due to the installation of poles," said Hasina, also the president of Awami League.

She said the people know about the government's limitation to providing them with adequate electricity as it would

take time to generate more power.

Hasina asked the authorities concerned to ensure smooth supply of power to the existing lines rather than expanding the network.

The directive came following a newspaper report that the REB was procuring 51,000 poles under a tender floated in July, 2009 to expand its network although rural areas experience up to 10 hours of load shedding a day.

Procurement of poles under the REB had been an area of corruption since the SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

WAR CRIME TRIAL

Tribunal, prosecution, probe agency finalised

HASAN JAHIH TUSHER

The government high-ups yesterday finalised formation of the tribunal, prosecution and investigation agency to hold the much-awaited trial of war criminals of 1971.

The name of the members of the tribunal, prosecution team and investigation agency will be announced formally before the Independence Day and after the prime minister's approval, a highly placed source told The Daily Star.

The government would not allow the top-ranking leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami to leave the country as the process of trying the war criminals would start soon. The Jamaat leaders have also been kept under constant watch, said home ministry sources.

A three-member tribunal will be set up to hold the trial while at least 12 noted practicing lawyers of the High Court and other courts will be the members of the prosecution team. Half a dozen will be members of the investigation agency.

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Recipe for disaster

Bus drivers get crazy for more trips amid risk of missing out on target income set by owners

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Many bus drivers in the city drive recklessly for a decent living, which is otherwise hard to earn under the existing pay systems in public transport, say persons involved in the sector.

Local service bus drivers have to earn a certain amount set by the owners every day. They also have to bear the fuel and other expenses.

If they fall short of that target, they have to pay for the deficit from their purse.

Drivers in the seating services are paid on the basis of the number of their daily trips. For them, the target is to make as many trips as possible.

Ensuring passengers' comfort and obeying traffic rules are a secondary consideration, alleged some commuters.

Of the buses plying the city routes, the ones that touch every stop and carry passengers standing are known as local service. The buses that run through fewer stops and do not allow passengers beyond the number of their seats are called seating service.

Prof Shamsul Hoque, director of Accident Research Institute at Buet, said under the present systems, a driver does



WATCH OUT!

Bangladesh has one of the highest road fatality rates in the world. Here buses and mini-buses are the top killer-vehicles, while 49 percent of their victims are pedestrians. Read our special coverage on this menace tomorrow.

not get a job every day. So when his turn comes he resorts to rash driving to earn as much as possible.

He said if the drivers were salaried employees, the number of the passengers or trips would not matter much, obviating the need for frantic driving.

According to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, 7,367 buses and minibuses ply 40 metropolitan and sub-urban routes and 117 sub-routes in the capital.

AKM Ruhul Kuddus Khokon, senior vice-president of the Association of Bus Companies, said almost half the city buses operate in local services. There are over 60 such companies in the capital.

Most of the local service buses are habitual violators of traffic rules. They stop almost anywhere to pick or drop passengers. They do not bother if they are at crossroads or facing a signal.

On busy routes, drivers race to get to the next stop before others to pick passengers. Sometimes they drive so rashly that buses scrape against each other and often ram vehicles ahead.

"How will I earn the target amount if I don't get the maximum number of passengers on a trip? I must make over Tk 3,100 a day in addition to the fuel cost, or else I will have to pay the owner out of my own pocket," says a driver who works on Abdullahpur-Gulistan route.

Besides, he adds, traffic congestion greatly reduces the number of trips. To make up time lost in gridlocks, they have

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Cabinet scraps DST for 'public sufferings'

PM unhappy at failure of system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday cancelled its earlier decision to reintroduce daylight saving time from April 1, considering its repercussion on people.

The latest decision came from a regular cabinet meeting with Premier Sheikh Hasina in the chair following criticism of the system from various sections of people.

The premier expressed unhappiness to her cabinet colleagues saying it is very unfortunate that people sometimes cannot adapt to a new system.

"We introduced the system SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

NEWS ANALYSIS

Why DST failed?

SHARIER KHAN

When the daylight savings time (DST) was introduced in June last year, many people were critical about its impact because it changed their lifestyle.

Unable to accept change, they sarcastically termed the DST as "digital" time. Many others however found the measure useful, and welcomed it.

Back then, The Daily Star obtained data from the Power Development Board (PDB) to see if introduction of the DST had any effect on energy consumption. After all, the idea of DST -- introduced first in 1895 in the US -- was supposed to have some impact on energy consumption.

The PDB data back then showed that the peak power demand -- typically around 7:00pm to 8:30pm -- was reduced by 200 megawatts during June-July due to the DST. In addition the traditional peak power demand hours shifted from evening to midnight during July, meaning the country's power demand shot to its highest point around midnight to 1:00am, instead of the typical peak hours of 7:00pm to 8:30pm.

The gap between peak and lowest power demands also reduced to only 300 MW to 400 MW from the past trend of 1,000 SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

RanksTel chief, 8 others get HC bail

Dhaka Phone's writ petition rejected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail for three months to RanksTel Chairman A Rouf Chowdhury and eight others in a case alleging their involvement in illegal VoIP (voice over internet protocol) business.

The eight others are RanksTel directors Amanullah Chowdhury, Anwar Hossain, Ashraf Uddin, Fazle Selim, Zakia Rouf Chowdhury, Romo Rouf Chowdhury and Sohona Chowdhury, and its Chief Operation Officer AKM Shamsuddin.

The HC bench of Justice SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

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countries grow into nations
promises grow into commitments
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